

# US 101 Pismo Congestion Relief: Left Shoulder Part-time Travel Lane Component



*Photo Source: Federal Highway Administration*

## LOCATION:

Southbound US 101 near Spyglass Drive to Pismo overhead (bridge over the railroad tracks) within the city of Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo County.

## MAJOR FEATURE

Reconstruct the inside left shoulder for a part-time commuter lane during peak periods for about four miles. *This component will operate as a pilot project not to exceed five years without required legislative action.*

## BENEFITS

- Using a paved shoulder as a part-time travel lane alleviates recurring bottlenecks.
- Significantly reduces congestion-related collisions as freeway flow is restored.
- Improves and optimizes mobility and traffic flow on existing infrastructure.
- Minimizes congestion caused by stop-and-go conditions.
- Implementation costs less than adding a full-time third lane (estimated in the tens of millions) and avoids highway expansion beyond the existing state right-of-way.
- Timed operations of the new lane are adjustable based on traffic flows.
- Safety/performance benefits of the median shoulder area retained for non-operating hours (about 21 hours daily).
- Right shoulder maintains ability to provide safe refuge for vehicles involved in minor incidents, enforcement actions, breakdowns and tow removals.

## HOW IT WORKS

- Right shoulder remains unchanged while inside left shoulder is modified for a part-time travel lane/shoulder.
- Message signs inform motorists on hours of use, closures and merge locations.
- Part-time travel lane/shoulder opens and closes during monitored specific periods.
- Operating about three hours daily during peak travel times is recommended for this project.



**California Department of Transportation**  
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## CONSIDERATIONS

- Part-time travel lane/shoulder (14-foot-wide design) is proposed to be 12-foot-wide with an additional two feet distance from the median separation barrier.
- Access to part-time travel lane/shoulder could feature one entry and one exit.
- Part-time travel lane/shoulder could be classified as a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane during operating hours.
- Left shoulder operation is better suited for longer distance trips as it avoids traffic weaving at entrance and exit ramps.
- Combine with Freeway Service Patrol (continuously roving service/tow trucks) to reduce clearance times from incidents or disabled vehicles. Restoring traffic flow quickly reduces delays.
- Part-time travel lane/shoulder concept has proven successful in several other states.

## ESTIMATED COST – \$20 million

The cost varies depending on existing infrastructure and whether variable speed limits are incorporated.

## POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES

- State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
- Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)
- Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP)
- Local road impact fees

## SLOCOG'S PUBLIC OUTREACH

This highway segment is identified in SLOCOG's 2014 *US 101 Corridor Mobility Master Plan* as a high priority location for congestion relief. The plan included extensive public involvement with multiple local agency stakeholders. Project development team meetings and public input will continue during future project phases.

## ESTIMATED SCHEDULE

Construction start – winter 2024

Construction complete – winter 2026



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